

Story 837 (1974 Tape 19)

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Location: Tercan, kaza town of
Erzincan province

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throughout
Suitor Task to Win the Hand of Mama Hatun¹

There is a bridge over the river two or three kilometers below Tercan. It is no longer in use, but there is an interesting legend about that bridge. I heard this from some villagers who live near that bridge

Mama Hatun was known in her time for her great beauty. There were many men who fell in love with her and wished to marry her. Whenever one of these men would actually propose marriage to her, she would tell him that the first condition for her acceptance of his offer was his completion of a certain task. The task was this. The suitor was required to build a bridge across the river for her. He must take from Tercan all of the building supplies needed to complete the construction. Once the construction had begun, he could not return to Tercan or go elsewhere for additional supplies. For a long while, none of her many suitors was able to accom-

¹Mama Hatun was a Seljuk princess of the Akkoyunlu (White Ram) period. Among other things, her tomb at Tercan testifies to her historicity. Some residents of Tercan claim that Mama is derived from kuma, a word which means second wife in a polygamous family, and in Tercan she is sometimes called Kuma Hatun as well as Mama Hatun. Although we have no specific dates for her, her period had to be either the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.

Story 837

plish this task.

At last, however, there came along a suitor who carried out the requirement successfully. He first spent much time calculating the exact amount of each building material that he would need. Then he had all of this moved the two or three kilometers down the river to the bridge site. Mama Hatun watched the progress of his work and concluded that this might succeed where all previous suitors had failed. Secretly she bribed a laborer working on the bridge to throw of the building blocks into the river. But the suitor aware of what was going on, and so he secretly retrieved block from the water. He continued his work until the bridge was completed, and when the last stone was in place, everyone agreed that he deserved to marry Mama Hatun.

One day shortly after she had been married, Mama Hatun boiled three or five eggs. She then colored and decorated each of these eggs in a different way. Then she took these to her husband and said, "I want you to taste each of these eggs and decide which one has the best flavor."

After eating part of each of these eggs, her husband said, "They all taste exactly the same to me."

Then Mama Hatun said, "Women are like that, too. Even though their colors and decorations may be different, they are really all the same."